



Welfare Rights Centre

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Welfare Rights Centre welcomes NSW government funding announcement

NSW Attorney General Mark Speakman today announced over \$6 million over two years in additional funding for community legal centres in NSW, stepping in to fill the void created by a pending reduction in funding by the federal government of 23 per cent in NSW due to commence on 1 July. This is important news for Welfare Rights Centre and the CLC sector as a whole.

Coordinator/Principal Solicitor Katherine Boyle said “we welcome the funding announcement. The cuts to other community legal centres would have affected our clients and would have exacerbated our clients’ problem with Centrelink.”

“This would have increased the demand on our service when we don’t have capacity to respond to an increase, especially when we are already dealing with the robodebts issue.”

“The funding announcement has come at a very critical time and will alleviate some of the pressures CLCs face when providing assistance to those who need advocacy the most.”

“I urge the Federal Government to recognise that more is required as these funds will only alleviate some of the pressures as there is an ever increasing demand for legal assistance from CLCs.”

Community Legal Centres NSW Chair Dr Linda Tucker said:

“The NSW government has effectively increased its contribution to our sector by 50 per cent, the largest annual increase from the state government for two decades. We thank the NSW Attorney General for recognising the essential work done by community legal centres and stepping in to fill this gap.

“In 2014 the Productivity Commission recommended an immediate injection of \$200 million into the legal assistance sector nationwide, simply to meet existing demand for services. Instead, the Commonwealth Government has refused to extend funding to the sector, amounting to a 30 per cent cut nationwide.

“This funding announcement will be welcomed across the NSW legal community. Now we need the federal government to chip in their fair share, so CLCs can meet existing demand and ensure that everyone has access to justice,” Dr Tucker said.

Other community legal centres (CLCs) in NSW particularly impacted by this announcement are: Women’s Legal Service NSW, Kingsford Legal Centre, Redfern Legal Centre, Immigration Advice & Rights Centre (IARC), Western Sydney CLC, Environmental Defender’s Office NSW (EDO NSW), Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), Illawarra Legal Centre, Elizabeth Evatt CLC in Katoomba, and Northern Rivers CLC.

Media contacts:

Welfare Rights Centre – Katherine Boyle 9211 5389

CLCNSW - Mark Riboldi 0433 753 376